



AGENDA AND JOINING INSTRUCTIONS

Thursday 11 November 2021 at 6.00 pm
Virtual Meeting - Online

Agenda

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

- 1 **Attendance**
(Members will be checked-in as they enter the meeting – please ensure you use your real, full name. A draft attendance list will then be circulated after the meeting. Please advise the Secretary of any errors or omissions in the draft list.)
- 2 **Register of Members** (Pages 5 - 8)
- 3 **Voting Entitlement for Member Organisations and Councillors** (Pages 9 - 12)
- 4 **Minutes of the 2020 AGM** (Pages 13 - 18)
(The minutes of the 2020 AGM were noted at the meeting on 28 January 2021 and are attached here for formal approval.)
- 5 **Chair's Annual Report**
- 6 **Election of Officers** (Pages 19 - 20)

ORDINARY MEETING

- 7 **Membership Changes** (Pages 21 - 22)
 - a) Changes of representatives
 - b) New membership applications
- 8 **Minutes of the meeting dated 17 June 2021** (Pages 23 - 30)
 - a) Approval as a correct record
 - b) Matters arising
- 9 **Minutes of the meeting dated 23 September 2021** (Pages 31 - 40)
 - a) Approval as a correct record
 - b) Matters arising
- 10 **Updates from Member Organisations**
(Please advise the Secretary before the meeting if you wish to raise a topic under this agenda item.)
- 11 **Update from the Borough Council**
Update from Cllr David Scott (Deputy Leader of the Council and lead member for Royal Tunbridge Wells, TWBC)

- 12 Town Centre Christmas Preparations**
Update on plans for Christmas around town
- 13 High Street Changes**
Update from Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager, TWBC)
- 14 OuRToWn - Community Interest Company and its relationship with Town Forum**
Update from Adrian Berendt
- 15 Reports from the Town Forum Working Groups**
a) Strategic Planning Working Group
b) Transport Strategy Working Group
c) Culture, Leisure and Tourism Working Group
d) Wellbeing Working Group
e) Finance and Other Issues Working Group
f) Water in the Wells Working Group
- 16 Any Other Urgent Business or Topics for Future Meetings**
- 17 Future Meetings**
 - 20 January 2022
 - 24 March 2022



Joining Instructions – by computer

Click on the following link to join the meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87075279152?pwd=TEE5djIRQlpxREVJUKVvc2s2ZUNGUT09>

Meeting ID: **870 7527 9152** Passcode: **867170**

(The meeting ID and passcode are embedded in the above web address so if using the link you will not need to enter them separately.)

During the 'join in' process please note:

1. Agree to use your computer video
2. Agree to use your computer audio
3. Please ensure your **display name is your own full name** and not, for instance, a personal nickname or "My iPad" or other unidentifiable object. The name can be altered either before or immediately on entry to the Zoom meeting. People who cannot be identified will be asked to confirm their name.
4. If you have a problem, please open the Zoom client and 'message' on the system direct to "TWBC Democratic Services" who will be running the system on behalf of the Town Forum.
5. On entry you will automatically be put into a 'waiting room'. If its busy there may be a delay in admitting you but be assured the meeting will not start until everybody waiting has been admitted. To ensure a speedy entry into the meeting please ensure your display name shows your actual name.

Joining Instructions – by telephone

Should you wish to join the meeting by telephone only, please dial one of the following numbers and add the meeting ID and passcode when requested by the automated system:

0208 080 6591 United Kingdom

0208 080 6592 United Kingdom

Meeting ID: **870 7527 9152** Passcode: **867170**

Important information on joining

1. The meeting will be recorded and may be made available online.
2. Please mute your microphone when not speaking to reduce background noise. Attendees via telephone can mute themselves by typing 'x 6' on their keypad.
3. The organisers may mute or unmute all or individual microphones if necessary, but we will try to avoid this.
4. If you wish to speak during the meeting please either type 's' in the chat window or raise your hand using the 'reactions' button. The Chairman will invite you to speak to avoid multiple people trying to speak at once. Please unmute your own microphone when invited to speak by the Chairman and mute again afterwards.
5. The meeting will be open early, from 5.30pm, for those who are not used to Zoom so that you can become familiar with the platform.

This page is intentionally left blank



REGISTER OF MEMBERS

(09 November 2021)

The table below sets out the various membership organisations and their nominated and substitute representatives, where available, and the councillor members which make up the body of the Town Forum.

Please notify the Secretary as soon as possible of any errors or changes.

Member Organisations

Association/Group	Primary Representative	Substitute
Banner Farm Residents' Association	Diana Butler	Veronika Segall-Jones
Benhall Mill Road Land Association	Altan Omer	Ken Norman
Beulah Road Residents' Association	Stuart Anderson	Chris Morris
Boyne Park Residents' Association	Dorothea Holman	Lindsay Barker
Calverley Park Crescent Association	Tim Ball	Stuart Macdonald
Calverley Park Gardens Residents' Association	Sue Diales	n/a
Calverley Park Residents' Association	Jane Fenwick	n/a
Camden Park Residents' Association	Tim Harper	Sally Manning
Camden Road Guild	Sue Kaner	n/a
Civic Society of RTW	Brian Lippard	John Cunningham
Clarence Road Users' Association	Alec Taylor	Paul Sinclair
COCA (Camden Hill, Oakfield Court Road and Cambridge Gardens Residents' Association)	Sue Pound	Tony Miller
Culverden Residents' Association	Mark Booker	Michael Lees
Dudley Road Residents' Association	Jenina Bas-Pendry	Big Bilski
Friends @ The Amelia Scott	Anne Stobo	Mike Trudel
Friends of Calverley Grounds	Rebecca Dodsworth	Lisa Grant
Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Parks	David Barnett	n/a

Association/Group	Primary Representative	Substitute
Friends of Hawkenbury Recreation Ground	Valerie Le Moignan	Pamela Lock
Friends of The Commons	Ian Beavis (acting)	n/a
Friends of The Grove	Tim Tempest	Joanna Anderson
Friends of Trinity Churchyard	Charles Pope	n/a
Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery	John de Lucy	n/a
Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery	Margaret Ginman	David Bushell
Grantley Court Residents Association	Lorna Blackmore	n/a
Grove Hill House Residents' Association	Robert Chris	Ingrid Pope
Hawkenbury Village Association	Geoff Shewry	n/a
Inner London Road Residents' Association	Carol Wilson	Pat Wilson
Kingswood Residents' Association	Adrian Johnson	n/a
Molyneux Park Gardens Residents Association	Don Sloan	Mark Lavenstein
Nevill Court Roads Committee	David Kershaw (acting)	n/a
Nourish Community Foodbank	Dawn Stanford	n/a
Poona Road Residents' Association	Alastair Tod	n/a
Ramslye Residents	Adrian Thorne	Noreen O'Meara
Residents' First	Chris Stevenson (acting)	n/a
Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom	Katharina Mahler-Bech	n/a
Royal Tunbridge Wells Together	Sarah-Jane Adams	n/a
Sherborne Close Management Committee	Mary Wardrop	n/a
Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District	Caroline Auckland	Angela McPherson
St John's Road Residents' Association	Marguerita Morton	Tony Mole
Telephone House Neighbours' Association	Katharina Mahler-Bech	n/a
The Avenues Residents' Association	Tim Tempest	n/a
The Forum	Carolyn Gray	Jason Dormon
Trinity Theatre	Alex Green	Jocelyn Cheek

Association/Group	Primary Representative	Substitute
Tunbridge Wells Access Group	Andy England	n/a
Tunbridge Wells Anti-Aircraft Noise Group (TWAANG)	Irene Fairbairn	Angus Stewart
Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group	Adrian Berendt	Paul Mason
Tunbridge Wells Business Forum	Allan Gooda	Nicholas Kelly
Tunbridge Wells Dementia Friendly Community	Jocelyn Cheek	Christine Parker
Tunbridge Wells Friends of the Earth	Marieke de Jonge	Steve Walter
Tunbridge Wells Older People's Forum	Denise Watts	Veronika Segall-Jones
Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival	Matthew Brown	Ailsa Molyneux
Tunbridge Wells Repair Café	Chris Murphy	n/a
Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association	Michael Holman	David Wakefield
Tunbridge Wells U3A (IN ABEYANCE)	n/a	n/a
Upper Stone Street Residents' Association	Helen Featherstone	n/a
Warwick Park Residents' Association	Neil Williams	Andrew Hempleman
(Co-optee)	Marianne MacDonald	n/a

Councillor Members

Ward	Member	Member	Member
Broadwater	Christopher Hall	Chris Woodward	n/a
Culverden	James Rands	Justine Rutland	David Scott
Pantiles & St. Mark's	Wendy Fitzsimmons	Andrew Hickey	James Scholes
Park	Christian Atwood	Nicholas Pope	Victoria White
Sherwood	Bob Backhouse	Lance Goodship	Hugo Pound
St. James'	Ben Chapelard	Rob Wormington	n/a
St. John's	Mark Ellis	Peter Lidstone	Marguerita Morton

This page is intentionally left blank



TOWN FORUM AGM 2021

VOTING ENTITLEMENT FOR MEMBER ORGANISATIONS AND COUNCILLORS

Paragraph 3.1.2 of the Constitution requires that “In order to vote at the AGM or any EGM the named representative of a members organisation or their substitute shall have attended at least 50 percent of possible meeting that could have been attended in the previous 12 months. This percentage shall be pro-rata for organisations joining part-way through the year.”

Similarly, paragraph 3.1.4 of the Constitution requires that “Councillor members shall be eligible to vote at the AGM and any EGM if they have attended at least 50 percent of possible meeting that could have been attended in the previous 12 months. This percentage shall be pro-rata for councillors elected and joining part-way through the year.”

Five meetings have been held in the relevant period: 16 November 2020, 28 January 2021, 18 March 2021, 17 June 2021 and 23 September 2021.

The Town Forum also held an informal ‘briefing’ on 12 April 2021 plus two ‘hustings’ on 20 April 2021 and 22 April 2021 but these do not count in the number of eligible meetings.

Member Organisations who have attended at least 50% of possible meetings:

Banner Farm Residents’ Association*

Beulah Road Residents’ Association

Boyne Park Residents’ Association*

Calverley Park Crescent Association

Calverley Park Residents’ Association*

Civic Society of Royal Tunbridge Wells

COCA (Camden Hill, Oakfield Court Road and Cambridge Gardens Residents’ Association)

Culverden Residents’ Association

Dudley Road Residents’ Association

Friends @ The Amelia Scott

Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Park*

Friends of the Grove*

Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery*

Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery*

Grantley Court Residents' Association*

Hawkenbury Village Association

Inner London Road Residents' Association*

Molyneux Park Road Residents' Association*

Nourish Community Foodbank

Poona Road Residents' Association*

Ramslye Residents*

Residents First

Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom*

Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District*

Telephone House Neighbours' Association*

The Avenues Residents' Association

The Forum*

Tunbridge Wells Anti-Aircraft Noise Group*

Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group*

Tunbridge Wells Friends of the Earth

Tunbridge Wells Older Peoples Forum*

Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival

Tunbridge Wells Twinning & Friendship Association*

Upper Stone Street Residents' Association

Warwick Park Residents' Association

(* = 100% of possible meetings)

(35 out of 56 member organisations are eligible to vote)

Councillor Members who have attended at least 50% of possible meetings

Councillor Ellis

Councillor Fitzsimmons*

Councillor Hall

Councillor Lidstone

Councillor Morton

Councillor Pound*

Councillor Rutland*

Councillor Scott

Councillor Woodward*

Councillor Wormington

(* = 100% of possible meetings)

(10 out of 19 councillor members are eligible to vote)

Member Organisations and Councillor Members not listed above have not met the attendance requirement set out in the Constitution and will not be able to vote at the AGM.

This page is intentionally left blank

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 19 November 2020 held online via Zoom, starting at 6pm.

Members: Stuart Anderson (Beulah Road Residents' Association), Caroline Auckland (Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District), Tim Ball (Calverley Park Crescent Association), David Barnett (Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Parks), Jenina Bas Pendry (Dudley Road Residents' Association), Adrian Berendt (Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group), Lorna Blackmore (Grantley Court Residents' Association), Mark Booker (Culverden Residents' Association), Stephen Bowser (Residents First), Matthew Brown (Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival), Robert Chris (Grove Hill House Residents' Association), Marieke de Jonge (Tunbridge Wells Friends of the Earth), John de Lucy (Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery), Peter de Wit (Nevill Court Roads Committee), Helen Featherstone (Upper Stone Street Residents' Association), Ross Feeney (Royal Tunbridge Wells Together), Jane Fenwick (Calverley Park Residents' Association), Margaret Ginman (Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery), Caroyn Gray (The Forum), Dorothea Holman (Boyne Park Residents' Association), Michael Holman (Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association), Delphine Houlton (Hawkenbury Village Association), Brian Lippard (Civic Society of Royal Tunbridge Wells), Marianne MacDonald (co-optee), Katharina Mahler-Bech (Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom and Telephone House Neighbours Association), Sue Pound (COCA), Veronica Segall-Jones (Banner Farm Residents' Association and Tunbridge Wells Older Peoples Forum), Don Sloan (Molyneux Park Gardens Residents' Association), Dawn Stanford (Nourish Community Foodbank), Anne Stobo (Friends of Tunbridge Wells Museum, Library and Art Gallery), Angus Stewart (Tunbridge Wells Anti-Aircraft Noise Group), Tim Tempest (Friends of The Grove and The Avenues Residents' Association), Adrian Thorne (Ramslye Residents), Alastair Tod (Poona Road Residents' Association), Neil Williams (Warwick Park Residents' Association) and Carol Wilson (Inner London Road Residents' Association).

Councillor Members: Councillors Lidstone (St. John's ward), Pound (Sherwood ward), Rutland (Culverden ward), Scott (Culverden ward) and Woodward (Broadwater ward).

Others in Attendance: William Benson (Chief Executive, TWBC), Liz de Villiers (Chief Executive, Citizen's Advice), Lisa Glasscote (Community Larders), Councillor Mackonochie (Portfolio Holder for Communities and Wellbeing), Paul Mason, Councillor McInroy (KCC Tunbridge Wells West Division), Councillor Podbury (Rusthall ward), Councillor Rankin (KCC Tunbridge Wells South Division), Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager, TWBC), Chris Stevenson, David Wakefield, Jasmine Whiteside and Mark O'Callaghan (Secretary to the Town Forum).

APOLOGIES

- 1 Apologies were received from Councillor Morton (St. John's ward).

VOTING ENTITLEMENT FOR MEMBER ORGANISATIONS AND COUNCILLORS

- 2 The Secretary confirmed that the voting entitlement of those who had achieved the required level of attendance was as set out in the agenda.

MINUTES OF THE 2019 AGM

- 3 The Chairman noted that the minutes had been agreed in principal at the meeting in January 2020 but were submitted here for formal approval.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the AGM held on 27 November 2019 be approved.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

- 4 The Chairman gave his report, a copy of which is appended to these minutes.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

- 5 The Secretary introduced the report set out in the agenda. The following nominations had been received:
- Adrian Berendt – Chairman
 - Don Sloan – Deputy Chairman

The Secretary set out the procedure for voting electronically as follows: All members listed in the 'Voting Entitlement for Member Organisations and Councillors', as set out at agenda item 2, may vote by raising their hand and a count would be taken. A provisional result would be announced whereupon any member with concerns may challenge the result. In the even of a challenge a roll call vote would be taken.

No challenges to the provisional result were received therefore it was declared that the votes cast were as follows:

Adrian Berendt, Chairman: 34 YES, 0 NO
Don Sloan, Deputy Chairman: 34 YES, 0 NO

RESOLVED –

- 1) That Adrian Berendt be elected Chairman for 2020/21 until the date of the AGM 2021; and
- 2) That Don Sloan be elected Deputy Chairman for 2020/21 until the date of the AGM 2021.

NOTE: The meeting concluded at 6.20pm.



The voice of the residents of Royal Tunbridge Wells

Town Forum AGM – Chair’s report 19th November 2020

This is the time of year when I report back on the achievements of the Town Forum over the past 12 months and try to identify the challenges for the coming year. When I look back at 2020, all I can say, with more than a hint of irony is “well...that went well...”. When we met a year ago, which of us knew that we were three weeks away from a global pandemic being reported to the World Health Organisation?

I wasn’t completely wrong about 2020 though when I said:

“Whatever happens on 12th December 2019, Brexit will not be done on 31st January.”

Well, we’re now six weeks away from the transition period ending and we still don’t know whether Kent is going to be one large lorry park.

More locally, I also said:

“We need to hold at least one of meetings outside of the Town Hall in 2020.”

We’ve overachieved massively on that score, with all bar one of our meetings held in my house. I think we were one of the first organisations locally to embrace new technology, something I will come back to later. Despite the lack of physical meetings, we have increased our membership base and we now have 54 member organisations, including 4 new members:

- COCA (Camden Hill, Oakfield Court Road and Cambridge Gardens Residents' Association)
- Nevill Court Roads Committee
- Royal Tunbridge Wells In Bloom (shocked it wasn’t already a member); and
- Ramslye Residents our first RA in Broadwater ward

Welcome to you all, but particularly to Ramslye Residents: we lack Resident Associations in the south of the town. One TF member has helpfully put together a grid showing Town Forum representation ward by ward. About 30% of our member organisations speak for different interest groups across the town. Some 55% come from 3 out of 7 wards. The remaining 4 wards represent just 15% of our membership. In 2 of those wards, councillors attend pretty regularly– thank you - but in the other 2, councillor attendance is poor. I’m won’t name names (yet), but if you are a councillor in a ward with few Residents Associations, please think how your residents can be more effectively represented in Town Forum discussions.

Formed in 2005, the Town Forum is the voice of the 50,000 residents of Royal Tunbridge Wells on issues of common interest

Town Forum Management Group

Adrian Berendt (Chair); Don Sloan (Deputy Chair); Alastair Tod (Deputy Chair); David Wakefield (Finance); Jane Fenwick (Transport); Marianne McDonald (Wellbeing); Carolyn Grey (Culture, Leisure & Tourism); Mark Booker (Strategic Planning); Michael Holman (Water in the Wells)

COVID-19 has delayed finding a vision for the town. While I'm disappointed that the cross-party group didn't continue to meet earlier in the year, I understand why and it's great that it has now started up again. The COVID-19 group instigated by the Borough Council has been a great success. Meeting (virtually, of course) every couple of weeks, it allows a wide-ranging discussion about response and recovery issues. It includes councillors from all parties and across the borough, representatives from businesses and voluntary organisations plus the Town Forum and is largely free from party politics. Thank you, William, for setting that up and to all of your team for their continued support of the Town Forum in an incredibly difficult and eventful year. I'm particularly grateful for Mark O'Callaghan's help in keeping me on the straight and narrow.

Thanks go, of course, to those that volunteer on the Town Forum working groups, where the real work of the Town Forum happens. We need more people to join in; please do so!

I want, of course, to thank all the management group, who continue to suffer my disorganisation, but I want to single out Carolyn Grey in particular. Not just because she stepped up to lead the culture, leisure and tourism working group, but because she was brave enough to raise her head above the social media parapet and ask for positive suggestions people had about the town centre.

Like many of us, I do use social media. It gives me a good insight into what some people are thinking and saying, but I'm also conscious that it is highly unrepresentative and includes a small but vocal minority. The slew of negative and personal responses to Carolyn's perfectly reasonable suggestions dismayed me. We cannot conduct debate by shouting.

This is where the Town Forum is so valuable and why it remains so relevant as a channel for unbiased information. Thanks to the efforts of Katharina Mahler-Bech, the success of our twitter account, which is a fake-news free zone btw, can be measured by our increased following – up by a further 100 this year to 880 followers. It's a simple twitter handle @townforum – please follow us and tweet your news and views.

As ever, I am indebted to my long-suffering family, Louise, William, Robert, Alice and Suzanna. I had to block an obnoxious troll on social media last week. It wasn't because of something he said, but because he (I assume 'he') has an anonymous account. If you can't own up to your views, then better to stay silent. What were his accusations? 1) I am an ex-banker (wrong, but never mind) 2) I have room on my drive for 3 cars (technically right, although there's never more than our old one) and 3) of being the most selfish person in Tunbridge Wells. I leave that to others to judge. He may well be right. Certainly, I need to spend more time with my family. If you want me to continue next year as chair of the Town Forum, well OK, but it has to be my last year.

So, what of 2021? Given how 2020 turned out, I make no predictions, other than that it will be a very different place and we need to embrace whatever change it brings. Even if the global pandemic dissipates, we will be left two matters which will not. 1) We are in the midst of a technological revolution, which will make the industrial revolution of the 1800s seem like a pinprick in history. 2) Climate change forces us to think differently. If you haven't read the Government's 10 point plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, I urge to find

a comfortable spot and digest the contents of the paper. If you find yourself asking the question, but how will I do [... insert what you were doing in the past?], you might be disappointed. If you want to engage in how things can be better in future, as Carolyn did in her question on NextDoor, then, work with the Town Forum and, together, we can make Tunbridge Wells the lovely forward-looking place that we want it to be.

Adrian Berendt (aged 62 $\frac{3}{4}$)

19th November 2020

This page is intentionally left blank



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

TOWN FORUM AGM 2021 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Introduction

1. The Town Forum is administered by a Management Committee of officers elected at the AGM and the leaders of the working groups.
2. The officers are:
 - the Chair, who must be a named representative of a member organisation; and
 - two Deputy Chairs, at least one of whom must be a named representative from a member organisation.

Nominations submitted

3. At the specified deadline for the submission of nominations, the following nominations had been submitted:

Chair

Don Sloan (first term)

Deputy Chair

Adrian Berendt (first term)

4. Statements from each of the candidates are set out at the end of this report.
5. The Town Forum's Constitution states: "The Chair and both Deputy Chairs shall be elected annually and will only be eligible to serve a maximum of two terms in any one office unless a majority of eligible voting Forum members agree to allow a further term of office." Thus, further terms of office is permissible, subject to the agreement of the majority of persons voting at the AGM.

Voting eligibility

6. The Constitution states that at least one third of nominated representatives who satisfy the voting entitlement requirements must be present for the AGM to take place and for the officers therefore to be elected.
7. 35 out of 56 member organisations of the Town Forum have met the necessary attendance requirements (i.e. have attended at least 50% of possible Town Forum meetings across the year) and their representatives will be entitled to vote.
8. 10 out of 19 Councillor members have also achieved the minimum meeting attendance requirement.

Statement from Don Sloan OBE (nomination for Chair)

Adrian is standing down as Chair and suggested I might consider offering myself for the post. The Town Forum has gone from strength to strength under his chairmanship with impressive achievements, so taking over will be a challenge. I will do everything I can to follow his example and meet the needs that lie ahead.

Helen and I have connections with Tunbridge Wells dating back to the 70s when we purchased our first house here. After that we moved overseas where much of my work was with the British Council in educational development and cultural relations. Following two moves within Tunbridge Wells, we have lived continuously in our present house for the last twenty years. During that time I have been involved in community projects with the Rotary Club of Tunbridge Wells. I have attended Town Forum meetings since 2014, first when I was a borough councillor and now representing Molyneux Park Gardens residents. I have been a Deputy Chair of the Town Forum for the last two years.

Our **working groups** are vital for the effective functioning of the Town Forum so we need to ensure they have the support to continue being so productive, similarly for our social media to keep people connected and well informed of the value of our work and our achievements. I will continue the monitoring of our **membership** to ensure community participation from all areas of our town. We can also offer our support to the Mayor in the formation of a Youth Town Forum to help youth gain experience, find a voice and fulfil their needs.

Matters/issues on which we need to focus attention in the coming year include:

Inter-party talks following of the demise of the Calverley Square Project : this is still with us and we work with councillors to find a way forward.

The Local Plan is due for examination next January and February. A Town Centre Area Plan, understood to include The Pantiles, is also on the agenda. For more immediate attention is the future use of the Town Hall for which the Council proposals are attracting attention.

Number of councillors and electoral cycle The Local Government Boundary Commission for England have drawn attention to the disparity between the number of electors and number of councillors in our borough. Following the recent Council consultation on this and the vote by a full meeting of Council to preserve the status quo, the Boundary Commission will further study the issue. There could eventually be changes to ward boundaries significantly affecting our area of representation and, indeed, our membership.

The environment: Reducing carbon emissions will be on the agenda. The appearance of our town is important and the significant contributions by Water in the Wells and Tunbridge Wells in Bloom should continue. We'll also need to follow up on recent surveys we've helped with including one of businesses and another of benches in need of repair. Transport and active travel are also important to our environment and need our attention. In the shorter term when can garden waste bin collections resume?

Cultural provision is an essential ingredient for the vitality of our town. We look forward to the impending opening of the Amelia Centre and numerous festivals. Also how might we contribute to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations next year? There may be other anniversaries to celebrate in the town.



MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Changes of representatives:

The Friends of Tunbridge Wells Museum, Library and Art Gallery have changed their name and are now **Friends @ The Amelia Scott**. Anne Stobo remains the primary representative and Mike Trudel remains the substitute representative

Geoff Shewry is now the primary representative for **Hawkenbury Village Association**, previously Delphine Houlton. There is currently no substitute representative.

New membership applications:

A new application has been accepted from **Tunbridge Wells Repair Café**. Chris Murphy is the primary representative. There is currently no substitute representative.

This page is intentionally left blank



Minutes of the meeting on Thursday, 17 June 2021, held online starting at 6pm

Attendance

Member Organisations:

Banner Farm Residents' Association and Tunbridge Wells Older People's Forum – Veronika Segall-Jones | Boyne Park Residents' Association – Dorothea Holman | Calverley Park Residents' Association – Jane Fenwick | Civic Society of Royal Tunbridge Wells – Brian Lippard | COCA – Sue Pound | Culverden Residents' Association – Mark Booker | Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Parks – David Barnett | Friends of The Commons – Sally Balcon | Friends of The Grove and The Avenues Residents' Association – Tim Tempest | Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery – John de Lucy | Friends of Tunbridge Wells Museum, Library and Art Gallery – Anne Stobo | Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery – David Bushell | Grantley Court Residents' Association – Lorna Blackmore | Hawkenbury Village Association – Delphine Houlton | Inner London Road Residents' Association – Carol Wilson | Molyneux Park Gardens Residents' Association – Don Sloan | Poona Road Residents' Association – Alastair Tod | Ramslye Residents – Noreen O'Meara | Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom and Telephone House Neighbours Association – Katharina Mahler-Bech | Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District – Caroline Auckland | St. John's Road Residents' Association – Marguerita Morton | The Forum – Carolyn Gray | Tunbridge Wells Anti-Aircraft Noise Group – Angus Stewart | Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group – Adrian Berendt | Tunbridge Wells Friends of the Earth – Marieke de Jonge | Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival – Ailsa Molyneux | Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association – Michael Holman | Warwick Park Residents' Association – Neil Williams

Councillor Members:

Broadwater ward – Cllr Christopher Hall and Cllr Chris Woodward | Culverden ward – Cllr James Rands, Cllr Justine Rutland and Cllr David Scott | Pantiles and St. Mark's ward – Cllr Wendy Fitzsimmons | Park ward – Cllr Nick Pope | Sherwood ward – Cllr Hugo Pound | St. James' ward – Cllr Ben Chapelard and Cllr Rob Wormington | St. John's ward – Cllr Mark Ellis, Cllr Peter Lidstone and Cllr Marguerita Morton

Others in Attendance:

Borough Councillors – Cllr Matthew Bailey (Portfolio Holder for the Environment), Cllr Tom Dawlings (Leader of the Council) | Borough Council Officers – Nick Baldwin (Parking Engineer), Stephen Baughen (Head of Planning Services), David Candlin (Head of Economic Development and Property), Jane Fineman (Head of Finance, Procurement and Parking), John Strachan (Parking Manager) | Commons' Conservators – Steve Budden (Warden) Gemma Stapeley (Executive Clerk) | Guests – Lindsay Barker, Barbara Cobbold and Mairéad Ni Fhinn | Secretary – Mark O'Callaghan

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1 The following apologies were received:
 - Tim Ball (Calverley Park Crescent Association)
 - Marianne MacDonald (co-optee)

DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

- 2 The following substitutes were representing their respective member organisations:

- Veronica Segal-Jones (Banner Farm Residents' Association and Tunbridge Wells Older People's Forum)
- David Bushell (Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery)
- Noreen O'Meara (Ramslye Residents)
- Angus Stewart (Tunbridge Wells Anti-Aircraft Noise Group)
- Ailsa Molyneux (Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival)

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

3 a) Changes to Membership

The following changes in membership were noted:

- Stuart Macdonald was now the substitute representative for Calverley Park Crescent Association, previously vacant. Tim Ball remained the primary representative.
- Ailsa Molyneux was now the substitute representative for Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival, previously Linda Lewis. Matthew Brown remained the primary representative.

b) New Membership Applications

New membership applications had been accepted from:

- None

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 18 MARCH 2021

4 No amendments were proposed. The minutes were noted.

UPDATES FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

5 No updates were reported.

REPORTS FROM THE TOWN FORUM WORKING GROUPS

6 The Chairman called for more volunteers to help with the Working Groups which were the engines of the Forum, any offers to the Chairman in the first instance.

Strategic Planning

Mark Booker presented:

- Regulation 19 consultation on the Draft Local Plan closed on 14 June 2021. That was the last stage before public examination before an Inspector, probably in November 2021.
- If the Plan was found by the Inspector to be 'sound' it would likely come into effect in June 2022.
- The Forum welcomed the detailed presentation from Stephen Baughen, Head of Planning Services at the special briefing to the Forum on 12 April 2021 which informed the Forum's response to the consultation.
- The Forum had submitted 65 comments against various policies within the Draft Local Plan. Broadly, the Forum supported the Local Plan.
- Areas of concern were around transport and the environment where proposals did not go far enough.
- Provisions for more affordable housing were supported but building density and incursions into Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty were highlighted as concerns.

- The Forum strongly supported the idea of a Town Centre Area Plan and would be actively participating in the working group on this.
- The Forum did not expect to be called to the public examination but participation was at the discretion of the Inspector.

Transport

Jane Fenwick presented (further to the report on the agenda) –

Alleyways:

- Concern over the loss of a footpath had led to a survey of other alleyways and twittens throughout the town by members of the Forum.
- The town had been divided into 8 areas and each was surveyed by a team of volunteers noting the location, condition and subsequently the legal status of each pathway.
- There were a number of maintained but otherwise unmarked paths either in their entirety or branching from other paths.
- 70 entries were added to KCC's official database of public rights of way and are being added to TWBC's maps.
- A number of questions remained unanswered, including who owned the land, who maintained them, why where these paths not registered when they were laid? A further progress report would be presented at a future meeting.
- None of the routes through the Pantiles were protected.
- Concerns about specific paths should be fed back to the Transport Working Group.
- Council officers welcomed the report. Paths would be entered into the council's GIS (Graphical Information System) maps which would overlay various sources of information and help with issues such as identifying land ownership and risk of loss. It would also bring the paths to the attention of officers across the council when conducting desktop research.
- The Commons were protected under the County of Kent Act, separate to public rights of way.

Car Parks:

- Was consulted on a new name for the former Union House Car Park which needed to have a strong geographical link. The Pantiles Car Park was chosen.
- Internal areas were largely complete with external areas awaiting resurfacing. Estimated to open in August 2021.
- There may be opportunities for business and event advertising and directional signage on internal walls.
- Linden Park Car Park (near the former auction house) would remain open.
- At The Pantile Car Park, parking for the 1887 development was separate and cordoned off. There would be 112 public spaces including the existing disabled bays.
- 27 apartments in the 1887 development were sold without parking but there was the opportunity to buy 30 season tickets for The Pantiles Car Park and a further 38 season tickets for Linden Park Car Park.
- The Parking Strategy had been scheduled for review on the heels of the Local Plan and was intended to dovetail with the Transport Strategy and the Town Centre Area Plan. Covid had affected parking demand, particularly Torrington Car Park due to reduced commuter numbers and Royal Victoria Place due to reduced shopper numbers. A period of settling would need to be allowed before significant changes were considered.

- Work on the Town Centre Area Plan was expected to start in earnest in early 2022.

Bus parking:

- The Council confirmed there were no immediate plans to change the former coach park on Linden Park Road (behind Sainsbury's) back to coach parking, but this remained under review as part of the overall review of council assets. The coach park was not ideal for coaches due to tight turning circles and the risk of grounding so was converted to car parking at the request of local businesses and currently had the highest occupancy rates in the town.
- The lack of coach parking had led to the bus stand on London Road being used all day, causing congestion and ruining a tourist beauty spot.
- The bus stand on London Road had been in situ and in regular use for at least 50 years. An alternative site had so far not been found. The Council would not seek to remove the bus stand without an alternative as it served school buses which were preferable to many separate cars and would otherwise have to park on street.
- The bus stand had been expanded when the Linden Park Road Coach park was closed. Previously, tourist buses used the stand and only stopped briefly. Now the school buses were parked all day denying access to the tourist buses.
- The coach park needed to be reinstated or a suitable alternative found.

Active Travel:

- The Department for Transport had announced a further £280m for active travel schemes. Bold action would be needed quickly as deadlines and criteria were very strict but this was a good opportunity to bid for extra funding.
- Funding from the Local Growth Fund earmarked for reducing congestion on the A26 was at risk after several years trying to find an appropriate scheme. Negotiations were ongoing with KCC to try to make a bid to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership for the retention of the fund which would centre around the A26 between Southborough Common and Mabelton.

Electric Vehicle Charging:

- Visitors and residents were being surveyed to assess demand for EV charging.
- The necessary infrastructure in car parks was easier to achieve and these were within the control of TWBC so the initial focus was on car parks. KCC were responsible for the roads.
- On-street EV charging had been provided in Dover and Deal so KCC must be at least amenable to the idea.

Culture, Leisure and Tourism

Carolyn Gray presented (further to the report on the agenda) –

General updates:

- Trinity Theatre had been successful in getting Heritage Lottery Funding
- Local Magazine was good source of event and activity information for the town.

Benches (Caroline Auckland presented):

- The Bench Survey had been presented and welcomed by the Council. A number of follow-up enquiries were being addressed.

- Tim Tempest from the Men's Shed and Neil Williams from Warwick Park were ready to start work, just awaiting confirmation from the Council.
- Broken benches on Inner London Road would be repaired by the Commons Conservators.
- A broken bench opposite the Church of King Charles the Martyr would be repaired by TWBC.
- A community group had approached the Soroptimists seeking assistance in getting a new bench details of which had been passed to the Council. It was encouraging to see other groups raising the topic of new benches.

Community Interest Company (Adrian Berendt presented):

- The Town Forum was not a legal entity and as such was unable to attract funding. Plans were underway to create a new body for Tunbridge Wells, separate to the Forum, which would operate as a Community Interest Company.
- The Company would be a vehicle for funding to support the town through events and any other activities agreed by the trustees. Offers of assistance of either time or money would be most welcome.

Water in the Wells

Michael Holman presented –

General updates:

- The contract for a drinking water fountain at The Amelia was been awarded to Tim Ward of Circling the Square, a firm with a reputation for impressive water features. The design was supported by the Working Group.
- A bottle filling station had been installed at Dunorlan Park near the Pembury Road entrance.
- The Victorian fountain at Dunorlan Park was urgently in need of attention. The Council was aware and drawing up plan which must include long-term provisions to stop the feature becoming dangerous and an eyesore.
- An drinking water fountain had been installed at the new square outside the Southborough Civic Centre.

Pantiles:

- The water feature outside the 1887 development was expected to open in August and likely to combined with the unveiling of the Wiesbaden plaque near the junction with Eridge Road.
- The plaque had been presented in 2015 to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the twinning.
- A local businessman had highlighted proposals to take over and overhaul the chalybeate spring, currently managed by the Council. Plans were ambitious and exciting but potentially worrying. The Council had welcomed the proposals in principle. The spring was a fundamental part of the Pantiles and a major attraction to tourists.
- The land around the spring was owned by Targetfollow who currently granted a lease on an annually reoccurring basis to the Council. It was unclear who owned the water coming from the spring. There were likely to be complicated legal questions and details were scant at present.
- Any commercialisation of the spring would be subject to normal planning permission and environmental controls.
- The spring should be a public asset and initiatives such as the Community Interest Company may provide an appropriate vehicle in future.

- The businessman was seeking a 5-year lease with a short-end clause of 3-years. This would provide time for alternative proposals if the businessman's plan failed. Progress would be watched closely.

NEW LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

- 7 The Chairman congratulated Town Forum members Nourish Community Foodbank who's work had been recognised in the Honours List.

Councillor Dawlings presented:

- Resident of the borough since 2007, now a smallholder after an long career at the Bank of England.
- First elected in 2014, served on Planning Committee before joining the Cabinet. Always taken a collaborative cross-party approach, particularly in determining what to do with the Council's property assets.
- The pandemic had placed huge strains on Council finances, a large deficit was projected from insufficient support for increased costs and reduced income.
- The Council only received 10% of Council Tax, around £8.7million, and 3.8% of Business Rates, £2million. The majority of the Council's income came from charges for local services, approximately £21 million.
- Government support, as was received last year, was unlikely to be repeated and the Council expected to have to draw £2million from reserves to balance the budget. This was clearly unsustainable.
- The Council had performed well during the pandemic, not least by successfully distributing £52million of government grants to local businesses.
- In the three-week since taking office, the Leader had worked on setting out his priorities for the future. The Portfolio Holder for Communities would have special responsibility for rural areas and the new Portfolio Holder for Economic Development would have special responsibility for the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells.
- Environmental concerns would feature in all business of the Council: litter would be tackled, areas of outstanding natural beauty protected, waste efficiently collected, recycling made easy, parks managed to maximised environmental benefits and buildings made environmentally sound. A carbon audit had been undertaken in response to the declared climate emergency and the council's own carbon emissions were being reduced.
- The Local Plan had just completed the Pre-submission stage and proposals for a Town Centre Area Plan would be expedited.
- Economic growth was vital for wellbeing and the council's finances.
- The council did not own the former cinema site but was pressing for action. A meeting with the owners was being arranged.
- Post-pandemic the nature of work was likely to change, some businesses had already announced plans to vacate large offices. It was hoped that London-based businesses would seek to take the opportunity to relocate to less expensive and more flexible office space in towns like Tunbridge Wells. This could include re-using the Town Hall.
- In the immediate future the focus would be on developing plans for the Town Hall, events to support reopening the towns and tackling transport problems. Existing strategies would need to be reviewed to take account of changing conditions.

- In the longer term there would be less reliance on large contracts with services broken down into smaller local contracts or brought in-house. There had been a tendency in the past to out-source to large national contractors who set their own standards, in future contracts needed to be responsive and quality driven.
- These were the Leader's priorities and engagement with residents and the Town Forum would be important in developing Council policy.
- The Town Forum welcomed the new appreciation for the town centre and approach to cross-party working and contracts.
- The plastic barriers on the High Street had been difficult, partly due to having to use KCC contractors Amey. They would be replaced with quality parklets and planters in the very near future.
- Previous plans to transfer Highways responsibility (roads, drainage, lighting and pavements) from KCC to TWBC had failed. Whilst renewing those efforts was not on the immediate plan it was important that decisions were taken at the appropriate level.
- Solar panels were already in place on the roofs of some leisure centres. 91 panels would be installed on the roof of the Amelia Scott as part of the development. The roof of the Town Hall was about to be renewed and funding was being sought for further solar panels.
- The reopening of the Amelia Scott would bring opportunities to collaborate with other heritage organisations, some with an international audience, which would bring visitors to the town.
- Communication and engagement with residents would be a much stronger focus in future. Communication was improving with Local magazine and email contacts but engagement was needing a big overhaul. New systems were being put in place to facilitate residents having the opportunity to be involved in idea formulation and not just comment on complete plans.
- The Mayor had selected as their theme for the year, 'the rising generation'. The intention was to hear the voices of young people and engage them in policy making. This would include efforts to establish a Youth Forum. Help was sought from the Town Forum and any expressions of interest may be sent to mayor@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

COMMONS CONSERVATORS

- 8 Steve Budden (Warden) and Gemma Stapeley (Clerk) presented:
- Increased usage of the Commons over the pandemic had brought both rewards and challenges.
 - A new website and facebook channel had gone live.
 - A new promotional video had been created which could be viewed at: <https://vimeo.com/546502880>
 - Waste removal on the Commons had been split into two contracts, one to empty litter bins and transfer the waste to a centralised point and a second to empty the bulk bins. The new arrangement was working well.
 - Regular litter picking was also taking place.
 - The Commons precept only covered existing maintenance and opening new areas had significant resource implications. The Conservators were reliant on the generosity of the friends group and the freehold tenants to fund new works.
 - Work had recently been completed on rejuvenating the Marl pits on Rusthall Common. Water was very important for biodiversity. The area had already been colonised by frogs and newts with more species expected before long.

- Bull's Hollow (a former quarry owned by Mr Bull) had also received work funded by a grant from Sussex Land Organisation received through the friends group. Water was drained into new 'scrapes' which would create a wetland.
- Holly was useful for shielding road noise and providing food and shelter for wildlife but had become problematically overgrown, particularly around Wellington Rocks. Clearance work, largely funded by the freehold tenants, had opened up new areas.
- Efforts were underway to create an all-abilities path between St. Paul's Christ and The Beacon Hotel.
- New machines had reduced the cost of maintaining the land
- Much work had gone into restoring benches on the Common, the unique 'hawthorne bench' design would eventually become the standard. The solid seat was more resistant to vandalism. The programme for this year would see 30 benches restored, including all 11 in Rusthall.
- Another traveller incursion on Rusthall Cricket pitch had caused significant damage to the ground and left much rubbish. Kent Police and the Borough Council acted quickly to have them removed within 72 hours. The Cricket Club and local volunteers worked hard to clear up the mess. Work was underway to strengthen the defences against further incursions.
- As well as clearing, new planting was taking place. A new hedge was planted around the Pantiles car park to screen the cars and prevent encroachment by the car park.
- The Commons was again involved in the Britain in Bloom competition. Fortunately judging was taking place a month earlier than normal this year meaning the orchids would be flowering.
- Maintenance work would focus on replicating the effect of grazing animals which would remove excess material from the ground. Overly fertile ground only encouraged gross-feeders such as brambles and nettles whereas lower-fertility soil was necessary for wildflowers and a more natural environment.
- Hawthorne benches cost approximately £650 including installation but also had an ongoing maintenance liability.
- The commemorative bench policy had just been revised. Now, people wishing to install a bench would own the bench for 10 years and need to renovate it twice during that time, the total cost would be approximately £1000. Alternatively, someone could take over an unadopted bench, renovate it once at the start and twice more during the ten years for £600.

ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS OR TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

9 No items were raised.

FUTURE MEETINGS

10 16 September 2021
11 November 2021 (AGM)



Minutes of the meeting on Thursday, 23 September 2021, held online starting at 6pm

Attendance

Member Organisations:

Banner Farm Residents' Association and Tunbridge Wells Older People's Forum – Veronika Segall-Jones | Beulah Road Residents' Association – Stuart Anderson | Boyne Park Residents' Association – Dorothea Holman | Calverley Park Residents' Association – Jane Fenwick | Civic Society of Royal Tunbridge Wells – Brian Lippard | Clarence Road Users' Association – Alec Taylor | COCA – Sue Pound | Dudley Road Residents' Association – Janina Bas-Pendry | Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Parks – David Barnett | Friends of The Grove and The Avenues Residents' Association – Tim Tempest | Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery – John de Lucy | Friends of Tunbridge Wells Museum, Library and Art Gallery – Anne Stobo | Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery – Margaret Ginman | Grantley Court Residents' Association – Lorna Blackmore | Inner London Road Residents' Association – Carol Wilson | Molyneux Park Gardens Residents' Association – Don Sloan | Nourish Community Foodbank – Dawn Stanford | Poona Road Residents' Association – Alastair Tod | Ramslye Residents – Adrian Thorne | Royal Tunbridge Wells In Bloom and Telephone House Neighbours' Association – Katharina Mahler-Bech | Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District – Caroline Auckland | St John's Road Residents' Association – Marguerita Morton | The Forum – Carolyn Gray | Tunbridge Wells Anti-Aircraft Noise Group – Angus Stewart | Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group – Adrian Berendt | Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival – Matthew Brown | Tunbridge Wells Twinning and Friendship Association – Michael Holman

Councillor Members:

Broadwater ward – Cllr Chris Woodward | Culverden ward – Cllr Justine Rutland | Pantiles and St. Mark's ward – Cllr Wendy Fitzsimmons | Sherwood ward – Cllr Hugo Pound | St. John's ward – Cllr Mark Ellis and Cllr Marguerita Morton.

Others in Attendance:

Co-optee – Marianne MacDonald | Borough Councillors – Cllr Harry Allen (Speldhurst and Bidborough ward), Cllr Tom Dawlings (Leader of the Council) | Borough Council Officers – Stephen Baughen (Head of Planning Services), William Benson (Chief Executive), Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager) | Guests – Lindsay Barker, Angela McPherson Louise Taylor | Secretary – Mark O'Callaghan

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1 The Chairman noted that long-standing member of the Town Forum Stephen Bowser, representing Residents' First, had recently died. He had made a considerable contribution to the Town Forum and the town generally, particularly with his in-depth knowledge of transport matters.

The Secretary advised that the minutes of the meeting on 17 June 2021 would be presented to the next meeting.

The Chairman asked members to feedback on whether meetings should return to in-person, remain online or a mixture. Comments to the Chairman or the Secretary.

The following apologies were received:

- Sally Balcon (Friends of the Commons)
- Mark Booker (Culverden Residents' Association)
- Peter de Wit (Nevill Court Roads Committee)
- Valerie Le Moignan (Friends of Hawkenbury Recreation Ground)
- Councillor Peter Lidstone (St. John's ward)
- Councillor Nick Pope (Park ward)
- Councillor David Scott (Culverden ward)

DECLARATIONS OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

2 The following substitutes were representing their respective member organisations:

- Veronica Segal-Jones (Banner Farm Residents' Association and Tunbridge Wells Older People's Forum)
- Angus Stewart (Tunbridge Wells Anti-Aircraft Noise Group)

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

3 a) Changes to Membership

The following changes in membership were noted:

- Alec Taylor was now the primary representative for Clarence Road Users' Association, previously Lucy Willis. Paul Sinclair was now the substitute representative, previously Kate Sergeant.
- Peter de Wit had retired from representing Nevill Court Roads Committee, a new primary representative was awaited. David Kershaw remained the substitute representative.
- Sally Balcon had retired from representing Friends of the Commons, a new primary representative was awaited. Ian Beavis remained the substitute representative.

b) New Membership Applications

New membership applications had been accepted from:

- None
- Enquires had been made by the Tunbridge Wells Repair Café, an application was awaited.

UPDATES FROM MEMBERS ORGANISATIONS

4 Tunbridge Wells Anti-Aircraft Noise Group

Due to technical problems, Angus Stewart was unable to give his update verbally but written details were circulated after the meeting and are summarised below:

- We have enjoyed many months of tranquillity from Gatwick's flights and it has been appreciated by many, if at a dreadful price. However, flight numbers are picking up, Gatwick is pushing ahead with its plans for substantial expansion and the review of airspace for the South East is making progress. All these have significant implications for Tunbridge Wells.
- We express our thanks to Councillor Alan McDermott, who has agreed to be the Borough representative on Gatwick's Noise Management Board. You may remember that the Board was reorganised to enable and encourage elected representatives from Councils to be members

of the Board's Community Forum to ensure that their communities were fully represented. Alan is now actively engaged in this role, we keep in touch with him.

- Gatwick's activity has been at a very low level since the start of the pandemic crisis. This has been slow to pick up again but, with the relaxation of travel rules this is changing and in the spring we can expect a return to historically normal levels of flying and the consequent overflying of the town.
- In July, Gatwick announced that it was pressing ahead with its planning application to convert the existing Standby runway for regular use. If their ambitions for growth are fulfilled, Gatwick will become almost as busy as Heathrow with all the implications for us that this carries.
- In an extraordinarily inept piece of timing, the Gatwick CEO Stewart Wingate announced this application with all its environmental implications just days after the UN warned that the world is facing a Red Alert over the Climate Crisis.
- Gatwick is currently conducting a public consultation on their planning application. We will shortly be updating our Web site (twaang.net) with full information about all this.
- The Government's review of airspace in the South East is an important and necessary development which should result in significant improvements for some but carries a potential threat for Tunbridge Wells and the surrounding countryside. Present navigation methods for arrivals into Gatwick result in a spread-out swathe of tracks, the peak often being over Langton Green. When the review's changes are implemented, perhaps around 2026, more precise routing is likely to be introduced as well. This involves the introduction of narrow 'motorways in the sky' and the positioning of these will be a highly contentious matter for communities to resolve. Step in, Councillor McDermott. Again, more details will be on our web site (twaang.net).

YOUTH TOWN FORUM

- 5 Councillor Chris Woodward (Borough Councillor for Broadwater ward and present Mayor of the Borough) presented:
- A working group of Town Forum members, referred to as the Youth Support Group, had been set up to help establish a separate Tunbridge Wells Youth Forum. Once established the Youth Support Group would assist the Youth Forum and provide a liaison between the Youth Forum and any schools who become involved.
 - Purpose of the Youth Forum would be to represent the interest of young people, starting with 16-18 year olds but potentially extending to younger people.
 - The Youth Forum would both allow young people to hear from and question civic leaders and provide a method by which civic leaders can consult young people.
 - The expectation is that the Youth Forum will set its own agenda and be self-supporting with officers appointed from amongst its members. Assistance will no doubt be offered from other sources including the Kent Youth Hub.
 - 6 of 13 schools had so far been approached with further appointments in the near future. Each school would appoint 2-4 representatives, 2 schools had already done so.

- The first meeting was planned to be held by Zoom on 20 October 2021. The draft agenda was expected to include introductions, setting the purpose of the Forum, agreeing organisational arrangements and starting on a work programme.
- It was hoped that young people leaving school but remaining in the area would continue to be involved and connections with North Kent College (formerly West Kent College) may be a focus for the future.
- The Youth Forum was a general interest body separate from any Citizens' Assembly. The Forum may have some involvement with other groups but that will be for the Forum to decide.
- A Youth Forum was a welcome initiative. It highlighted a lack of provision for people in the young-adult age group. The Youth Forum would hopefully equip young people with the skills to influence their world which could have longer term effects on how decision making would take place in future. Access for young-adults in the meantime was a separate matter.
- The Town Forum could be more proactive in helping establish new residents' groups, particularly in new developments. New housing tended to attract younger families and Town Forum membership could address some of the lack of representation. New residents of the town would also bring new ideas and best practice from elsewhere.

UPDATE FROM THE BOROUGH COUNCIL

6 Councillor Dawlings (Leader of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council) presented and took questions on –

Finances:

- The Council's finances were difficult but not as bad as previously expected, largely thanks to Government support.
- The majority of the Council's income came from fees and charges (£24million) rather than Council Tax (£8.5million) and with fewer people coming into town to work, the recovery was not expected to be quick. The shortfall in the budget for 2021/22 was currently £1.7million.
- Unemployment was down and there were signs of labour shortages in the rural economy, hospitality and haulage sectors.
- Lack of HGV drivers was also impacting on the waste collection services and the garden waste service had been suspended to protect critical services.
- The recent visit by the Secretary of State, Robert Jenrick MP, had been well received and suggested improvements to funding sources appeared to have been welcomed. Unfortunately the Secretary of State was subsequently sacked and efforts would have to restart with the new Secretary of State, Michael Gove MP.

Town Hall:

- The Council's cross-party working group had progressed in looking at options for re-purposing the Town Hall for co-working space. Market testing had demonstrated demand for such services. Three companies had been interviewed and whilst each took a slightly different approach all agreed that the small-office configuration of the Town Hall was desirable. A full invitation to tender and procurement process was being prepared.
- Using the Town Hall in this way would ensure the Council retained control of the use of the building (a clear desire following the Calverley Square project), provide an income stream for the Council, improve conditions for staff and draw workers into the town centre with its wider economic benefits.

Environment:

- The Council had reduced carbon emissions by 43% as at the last audit. New solar panels at the Amelia Scott would supply all the building's needs and provide a surplus back to the grid.
- Recently converted properties on Crescent Road had been done to high standards with air-source heat pumps.
- The Town Hall was about to undergo roof repairs which would reduce leaks and install new insulation. A grant application was being prepared which hopefully would allow further solar panels and secondary glazing to be installed.
- The Council was focused on reducing its own carbon emissions. Standards through the Local Plan and building regulations may improve things across the borough but carbon reduction outside the council's operations was not within its control.
- The efficacy of a Citizens' Assembly was currently under debate, the Council already had the access to expertise to reduce its own emissions.

Transport:

- The Council had worked for several years on getting a cycle path on the A26 but unfortunately these ultimately were unsuccessful as Kent County Council would not support it on safety grounds. Inter-settlement connections was important so the new focus would be on finding an alternative link to Tonbridge.
- Views were sought on the traffic measures on the High Street via an online consultation. Proposals for improvements could also be submitted via the consultation.
- The Borough Council needed to work with the County Council on highways matters. Considerable time and money had been spent working up the plans for the A26 and KCC had been hesitant all along. Similarly, the Council had been working on plans for electric vehicle charging in car parks, charging on street would require approval from KCC which was currently not forthcoming so any money spent here was at risk.

Culture:

- It was hoped the funding from the transport scheme could be redirected to the Amelia Scott. Work was progressing well. External construction was complete and internal fit out was on target to be complete by the end of the year.
- The Council was leading a steering group on the Cultural Compact comprising representatives of Kent County Council, 6x local creative businesses, 2x cultural organisations, Business Improvement District, West Kent Enterprise Advisor Network, Tunbridge Wells Health Action team. A bid for funding was being prepared for the Community Renewal Fund.

Afghan Refugees:

- The Borough Council currently employed 3x former Afghan translators who had been resettled to Tunbridge Wells in 2013. They reported that they and their families back in Afghanistan were under pressure from the Taliban and the Council was liaising with the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office to see whether more could be done to evacuate the families.
- The Council had committed to funding the resettlement of 5 Afghan families who previously worked for British military or diplomatic services under the Government's refugee scheme. Demand for social housing was so great that private landlords were being asked to put their properties forward.

- The Council did not have powers to compel housing providers but was actively working to encourage as many as possible. There had been many offers of individual rooms which unfortunately were unsuitable.
- The former Job Centre building on Grosvenor Road was in private ownership and could not be used for housing refugees. A planning application had been submitted to convert it to residential but this was a private development.
- The council was aware of a number of empty properties through the Council Tax records. Many of these properties were empty because they were not in a fit state but the Leader would speak again to the Housing team to see what more could be done to return these buildings to use.

LOCAL PLAN AND TOWN CENTRE AREA PLAN

7 Stephen Baughen (Head of Planning Services, TWBC) presented – Town Centre Area Plan:

- With the exception of the old cinema site in the town centre and the Hendy's site on Mount Ephraim there were no site allocations for development in the town centre contained within the Local Plan, instead the Local Plan provided for a Town Centre Area Plan (TCAP) to be created.
- The TCAP would be a separate and smaller plan dedicated to the town centre alongside the Local Plan for the Borough.
- Benefits included: would provide an anchor and framework for various plans and strategies affecting the town centre (parking, economic development, culture, etc.), it would align and focus efforts to allow the town centre to grow and prosper, act as a firm vision and reassurance for those looking to invest in the town.
- Evidence gathered as part of the wider Local Plan indicated a rapidly changing economy, generally and as a result of the pandemic. A TCAP would be much more responsive to the changes.
- The Local Plan consultation had closed and officers were considering the responses ahead of submitting the plan. Work on the TCAP would commence soon after the Plan was submitted, expected early in the new year.
- A Town Centre Working Group consisting of representative of the BID, Town Forum, infrastructure and utility service providers, county advisers, youth groups and borough councillors would be established.
- A collaborative approach would seek to create a vision and a flexible framework which would allow the market to flourish.
- The Town Centre Working Group would be formed as soon as possible after the completion of work on the Local Plan.

Permitted Development:

- The Government had announced proposals to make it easier to convert commercial buildings to residential through relaxed permitted development rights.
- Evidence showed, despite the changing economy, there was still a lack of office space in the town. 22% of office space had been lost since 2013 and a further 22% was at risk.
- The Council had moved to protect certain office buildings through the use of 'Article 4 Directions' (A4D) which removed the assumed permitted development rights and meant any proposed conversion would require planning permission.
- 20 such A4D, originally served in 2018, had been renewed and 2 new A4D had been served recently.

- A further 9 A4D had been served outside the town centre, mainly village shops where the loss of such facilities would have a disproportionate effect on the whole community.

Local Plan:

- It was expected that the Local Plan would be submitted to the inspector in Q3 of 2021 with examination occurring in 2 blocks of 2 weeks in January and February 2022.
- Last year, the Government had announced plans to change the calculation of housing need which would have seen many more houses needing to be built in the borough. The Council was proceeding with its Local Plan on the basis of it coming into effect during the transitional phase saving the borough from the biggest changes and would have met the deadline. In the event, the Government back down from the changes which removed the risk.

THE PANTILES

8 Carolyn Gray (Leader of the Culture, Leisure and Tourism working group) reported:

- A number of concerns relating to the Pantiles had been received, including:
 - The state of the spring
 - Plans to manage the well privately
 - Lack of accessibility when markets and events were taking place
 - Infringements on the public right of way, particularly during Jazz on the Pantiles
 - Unwelcoming signage
 - Lack of public toilets and whether the new Pump Room had publicly accessible toilets
 - The ability of the Town Centre Area Plan to protect and enhance the Pantiles considering its private ownership
- Answers were being sought.

Stephen Baughen (Head of Planning Services, TWBC) advised:

- The Pantiles would be within the town centre area boundary and subject to the Town Centre Area Plan.
- The Pantiles was also within a conservation area so any development or alteration would require planning permission at a higher level of scrutiny, particularly so in the case of listed buildings.

ELECTORAL CONSULTATION

9 Mark O'Callaghan (Scrutiny and Engagement Officer, TWBC and Secretary to the Town Forum) presented:

- A review of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council was being undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission.
- The Commission was independent of the Council and the Government.
- The Council had last been reviewed in 2001 since which a number of wards had drifted outside the acceptable ratio of electors to representatives.
- The review would form 2 parts: 1) To determine the number of councillors; 2) To determine the number and boundaries of the internal wards.

- Ahead of the review, the Council would be considering its own electoral cycle (whether to elect 'by thirds' or 'all-out'). This was not a matter for the commission but would impact on the options available to the commission:
 - If the Council retained elections by thirds, the total number of members must be divisible by three and the new warding arrangements will be based on a uniform pattern of three-member wards.
 - If the Council switched to all-out elections there could be a variety of 1, 2 or 3 member wards or all one-member wards.
- The Council would be invited to submit its evidenced proposals on council size by November 2021. The number of councillors should be based on what is needed taking account on the number needed to effectively run the council and represent the people.
- The Council undertook a consultation on whether to change electoral cycle and what number of councillors was needed:
 - For electoral cycle – there was no clear preference. Unless the Council resolved to change, the default position is to retain election by thirds.
 - For council size – 49% felt there should be fewer councillors, 40% the same and 11% more councillors. A wide variety of reasons accompanied the results.
 - Full details were available in the report to the General Purposes Committee.
- The Council would decide its submission to the commission at the Full Council meeting on 6 October 2021.
- In the new year, the commission would publish its decision on council size and initial plans on warding arrangements and commence a public consultation.
- Responses would be received and the commission would consult on a second draft in July – September 2022.
- Final recommendations will be published in November 2022 and a draft order will be laid before Parliament in early 2023.
- Subject to agreement, the first elections under the new arrangements will be held in May 2024.

Discussion included:

- The Town Forum had made a representation in the council's consultation and would welcome a further update around the start of the first consultation by the commission.
- Members of the Town Forum could make representations to the Full Council if they wished.
- The response rate to the council's consultation was roughly as expected.
- Plans were underway to make consultations more engaging with a view to improving them in future.
- The Council was currently generously representative with one councillor per 1700 electors, the average for similar authorities was 2200 electors.
- Election by thirds and a reduction in numbers will result in huge rural wards which was bad for democracy.
- Such a technocratic question would require a more engaging consultation to achieve a full answer.
- It would be difficult to find a single solution to warding arrangements given the different needs of the urban and rural areas of the borough.

- Engagement was made more difficult by a lack of presence by the councillors, nobody had come out to the community to discuss the issues.

OURTOWN - COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH TOWN FORUM

10 This matter would be addressed at a future meeting.

REPORTS FROM THE TOWN FORUM WORKING GROUPS

11 Water in the Wells

Michael Holman presented:

- The fountain outside the Pantiles 1887 had officially been opened.
- A planning application had been submitted by the businessman proposing to take over the wells on the Pantiles. It had been reported in the press that the crowdfunding campaign had only raised £2k of the £120k target so there were now questions over the viability of the venture. Members would be watching the progress of the planning application and other activities closely.
- Some remedial work had been carried out at the Victorian fountain in Dunorlan Park. It was noted at a recent meeting with the Council that a plan was needed to save the fountain for the future with a plan in place, funding could be sought.
- It had been suggested at a recent meeting with Dandara who may be looking to develop a site on Eridge Road that a fountain would provide an appropriate link to the town.

Transport

Jane Fenwick presented:

- The next meeting of the working group was in October at which work would commence of formulating a vision for the town.
- The bus company which was using the London Road bus stand was also reported as causing problems in the narrow roads in Culverden. It was hoped that alternatives to the London Road bus stand could be put forward at the forthcoming Public Transport Forum however a long term solution was needed.
- The future of school travel would likely involve smaller electric buses limited to local capacity providing a shuttle-style service between transport hubs. In any case, all parties, including the borough council, had an interest in planning and preparing for the future.
- Bus parking on London Road was creating an eyesore out of what should be a beauty spot and key attraction for visitors.
- Parking on and around Boyne Park was becoming problematic again. Previous proposals for a permit parking scheme had fallen, supposedly due to a lack of interest from residents. Non-resident cars should be parked in the car parks earning money for the council and, by extension, the town.

Culture Leisure and Tourism

Carolyn Gray presented:

- The report on the agenda included a number of events and activities put on around the town. The list was not exhaustive. There was a sense of optimism amongst event operators.

- The Food and Drink Festival in Calverley Grounds and the Puppetry Festival were coming up. All support was welcome.

ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS OR TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

12

William Benson (Chief Executive, TWBC):

- Tunbridge Wells had the highest covid rates in Kent, regular contact with Public Health and neighbouring authorities was maintained. The peaks were mainly associated with outbreaks in schools. Precautions were being stepped up and the situation was closely monitored.
- A new PCR test centre was opening in Sevenoaks which should help save people needing to travel to Maidstone or Ashford. Health officials were looking into the possibility of providing test through local pharmacies.

Tim Tempest:

- The Council was thanked for organising a thank-you picnic in Calverley Grounds recognising the contribution of volunteers. The event had been well attended by many voluntary groups and had facilitated contacts which was hoped to lead to a second Men's Shed in Tunbridge Wells.

Anne Stobo:

- The Friends of Tunbridge Wells Museum, Library and Art Gallery were organising a poetry competition. First prize £100. Details would be circulated.

FUTURE MEETINGS

13

11 November 2021 (AGM)